

The Democracy Alarm

Research and political reasoning



Democratic backsliding, conceptual validity, aggregation and institutional implementation

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Your task

Start without advance reading. Use the explanations inside the activity. You are an independent analyst reviewing conflicting reports about fictional Bellara. Begin by defining the democratic condition your claim concerns. The two real articles disagree about what measures and evidence can tell us about worldwide democratic change. Explain a concrete procedure or comparison from each and explain how their evidence changes an conclusion. Then inspect Bellara's dated records, preserve an explanation and a rival for the same outcome, and predict an observation that could separate them before the later file arrives. Build your own measurement charter: exactly three indicators, operational thresholds and two explicit rules for combining evidence. The numerical exercises ask you to justify units, bases, time and weights. Finally, apply your rule to a new municipal dossier and design a rights-preserving inquiry. All cases and teaching numbers are invented. A strong submission states a supported finding, records what is unknown and explains a specific revision or defended retention of your earlier account.

Explain the studies using the in-app explanations

Article A • Explain the study

Use the Article A explanation here; no journal reading is required.

1. Explain why leaders making it harder to remove them might change election outcomes. Which pattern did Little and Meng examine, over what period?
2. What did they find, and what assumption connects that finding to their argument?
3. Separate the election pattern they measured from their suggested explanation about changing expert judgments. What remains uncertain?

Article B • Explain the study

Use the Article B explanation here; no journal reading is required.

1. What important part of democracy could an election-only measure miss? Use a specific example from the explanation.
2. Describe one test of the idea that experts had become more pessimistic: what was compared and what was found?
3. Why can a measure be consistent without measuring the full idea well? What does that test leave uncertain?

Use both studies

Use the two article explanations here; no journal reading is required.

1. Use one result from each explanation to assess the claim that more leaders are successfully locking in power.
2. In an invented example, information restrictions rise but governments lose elections as often as before for five years. Give two possible explanations for that combination.
3. What next record would help distinguish them? Predict what each explanation leads you to expect, and say what would change your judgment. This example is not a worldwide finding.

Before you start

No advance student reading is required. Use the simplified explanations inside the activity, with time for questions, analysis and saved continuation across sessions.

Check your instructor's required tasks and use Class mode for the assignment. The three required workspaces organize indicators, rule applications and numerical reasoning. Completing a cell or minimum-length note does not establish that the conclusion is sound.

Keep a record of document IDs, dates, actors, units and unknowns. Use the fictional cases for discussion; you do not need to state your own political allegiance or disclose family views.

Locate the save-status, progress-backup and print/export controls. Use a device and browser you can return to, and arrange a place for downloaded backups. A local save does not automatically appear on another device or in Canvas.

Work through the inquiry

1. Define the opening claim

Read Bellara's conflicting reports. State which democratic condition, place and period your question concerns. Identify what each report actually records. Preserve your starting note so that later evidence can be compared with a specific earlier conclusion.

2. Hold a source hearing

Explain Little and Meng's strongest argument connecting entrenchment to electoral outcomes. Explain a specific coverage objection and bias test from Knutsen and colleagues. State actual comparisons, findings and boundaries. Use one detail from each to defend an conclusion; naming two perspectives alone does not show how their evidence matters.

3. Trace the institutions

From the available Bellara records, generate an actor-authority-action-access account and a credible rival for the same outcome. Predict a dated observation that would discriminate between them before revealing the follow-up. After it arrives, cite records to retain or revise a particular claim. The optional component audit can preserve your trace. Keep observations and predictions visibly separate.

4. Build a reproducible warning charter

Complete 'Your three operational indicators' and 'Two rules applied to dated cases'. Publish your concept, electorate, categories or thresholds, evidence dates, weights and possible errors. Specify how both rules handle unknown and older evidence, then demonstrate a same-input disagreement. Label any invented demonstration values. Defend a public action and verification project within the actual council powers and supplied resource limit.

5. Explain and represent the data

Complete 'Unit, weight, time and calculation card' for each numerical question and the new office-week display. Show operations with their units, populations and denominators. Explain which public question your chosen summary answers and which protection or distribution it cannot reveal. Keep the fictional dataset's comparability assumption beside your interpretation.

6. Transfer, revise and export

Apply your warning condition to both cities in the new dossier. Commit your own mechanism, rival and separating prediction before the later record. Update with precise dates and design a feasible inquiry that preserves lawful access. Review the final brief against your earlier notes, stating a revised conclusion or new uncertainty. Save a progress backup, then print or export a record for human review.

Vocabulary

Democratic condition

A specified political protection or opportunity included in a definition of democracy, such as meaningful contestation.

Indicator

An observable sign used to measure a concept. Its categories, evidence and date must make the test reproducible.

Conceptual validity

How well a measure represents the condition it is intended to capture. A reproducible count can still omit important protections.

Turnover

A change in which party or leader holds office. Its absence requires interpretation alongside competition, access and popularity.

Entrenchment

Actions or institutional changes that help rulers remain in power by reducing opportunities to contest or replace them.

Compensatory rule

An aggregation rule that allows stronger component values to offset weaker ones, using declared scales, weights and a cutoff.

Necessary condition

A defended prerequisite that must be satisfied regardless of strengths elsewhere. Its threshold and unknown policy must be explicit.

Implementation

An action or rule being put into practice. Distinguish a proposed power, a legal order, delivery and usable access.

Population weighting

Giving national observations weight according to a specified population. This remains a summary of national values.

Unknown indicator

A component for which the required current evidence is unavailable. Its treatment must be declared rather than silently assumed.

Read and explain the graph

State the question, unit and comparison dates. Identify whether the observation is a country score, resident-weighted national value or office-week request rate.

Write the included population, numerator, denominator and weight beside each operation. Use later minus earlier for change and keep score points, percentage points and relative percentages distinct.

Choose and label a display that answers your stated question. Calculate with the declared weights or group-specific bases, and preserve the dataset's fixed-guide and comparability assumptions where relevant.

Interpret the display within its scope. Name an omitted subgroup, component or comparison record needed to evaluate a stronger political or causal claim.

Six assessment criteria

Your instructor reviews these six actual criteria once each on a 0 to 3 scale, for a maximum of 18. Completion and factual checks record work; they do not grade the argument. A supported retention of an earlier account can earn full credit.

1. Source contribution
2. Positive warranted finding
3. Same-outcome rival discrimination
4. Lawful feasible decision
5. Numerical interpretation
6. Unfamiliar transfer

The shared progression is 0 for missing or materially inaccurate work, 1 for emerging reasoning, 2 for developed reasoning, and 3 for convincing, specific and bounded reasoning. Your evidence, assumptions and feasible comparison matter; political agreement, prose polish, help use and changing your mind are not grading criteria.

Save and export your work

Check the save-status message as you work. Normal progress stays in this browser on this device when storage is available. Keep one active tab and preserve your version before resolving a saved-record conflict.

Use 'Save progress backup' at a stopping point to download the editable JSON record. Keep it when moving devices or clearing browser data; local storage is not a cross-device backup.

Use 'Restore backup' within this activity, then inspect the restored chapter and notes. Keep the original backup until you confirm that the intended record is present.

Use 'Download brief (.txt)' or 'Print / save as PDF' for a readable review copy. Inspect indicators, rule applications, calculations, original commitments and revisions in the export. Retain the JSON backup separately for continued work.

Optional private online saving

Online saving is optional. Connecting to a saving service does not upload or submit the device draft. Use Save online personal draft only when you want to create or update that personal copy; keep its private recovery key and your local JSON backup.

A personal online draft is not an instructor submission. To submit through a configured hosted class, find the class with its student submission code, review the destination, apply the assignment switches if requested, complete the Class record and save the current version online. Tick the explicit consent box and use Submit this response snapshot.

Submission sends that version to the identified class. Later edits stay personal until you explicitly submit again. This hosted-class route is separate from the Canvas assignment and its upload confirmation.

Submit separately to Canvas

First use 'Print / save as PDF' or 'Download brief (.txt)' and inspect the resulting record. Then open the separate Canvas assignment and upload the format requested by your instructor. Check Canvas for its submission confirmation. Saving in the player or exporting a file does not submit to Canvas. Treat the progress JSON as a backup unless the assignment explicitly asks you to submit it.